

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PARIS 07501 01 OF 02 151258Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-07 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05
IGA-02 /104 W
-----151316Z 038727 /50

R 151225Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0595
INFO AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 07501

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, FR, IT, MT
SUBJ: ITALIAN/FRENCH DIALOGUE WITH MINTOFF

REFS: A. VALLETTA 208. B. VALLETTA 291. C. STATE 39094

1. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR MEDITERRANEAN AFFAIRS BLOT
ADDS A FEW GRACE NOTES TO INTERESTING STATUS REPORTS
ITALIAN/FRENCH DIALOGUE WITH MINTOFF REFTELS A AND B
WHICH HE GENERALLY CONFIRMS.

2. ON WHOLE, QUAI CLAIMS TO SEE MINTOFF'S RESPONSES
SO FAR AS "POSITIVE" AND SENSES CERTAIN "SERIOUSNESS"
IN EXCHANGE WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE. SPECIFICALLY, BLOT
CLAIMS TO BE "REASSURED" BY MINTOFF'S ASSERTION THAT
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PAGE 02 PARIS 07501 01 OF 02 151258Z

HE WOULD NOT OPEN MALTA TO WARSAW PACT UNDER ANY
CONDIONS, AND THAT HIS FORMULA OF "ACTIVE NEUTRALITY"
IS ONLY AIMED AT FINDING "ARRANGEMENTS" WITH EUROPEANS
AND ARABS.

3. MALTESE, BLOT QUOTES MINTOFF AS SAYING, WOULD OF
COURSE HAVE TO FIND PAYING CLIENTS FOR ITS DRYDOCKS

AND RELATED FACILITIES. WHILE MALTESE WOULD OFFER NO SERVICES TO "MAJOR FLEETS," THEY MIGHT, FOR "COMMERCIAL REASONS," HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO MAKE "MINOR REPAIRS" OF LESSER MILITARY VESSELS OF NON-MAJOR POWERS. FOR EXAMPLE, IF LYBIANS WANTED TO HAVE THEIR PATROL BOATS ("VEDETTE") REPAIRED MALTESE MIGHT AGREE. BLOT COMMENTED THAT FRENCH MIGHT NOT OBJECT TO SUCH MINOR REPAIRS. TO AVOID CHARGES OF "BASING," SOME "QUOTAS" MIGHT HAVE TO BE NEGOTIATED AS TO HOW MANY OF SUCH VESSELS MIGHT REMAIN FOR HOW LONG IN MALTA.

4. WHILE THINGS COULD, ON THE WHOLE, HAVE GONE WORSE, BLOT STRESSES THAT THE TWO BASIC PROBLEMS, NEVERTHELESS, REMAIN UNSOLVED. THE FIRST INVOLVES MINTOFF'S DEMAND THAT FRENCH PARTICIPATE IN "GUARANTEEING" MALTESE NEUTRALITY. QUAI STILL DOES NOT KNOW PRECISELY WHAT THIS MEANS, APART FROM FACT THAT MINTOFF WOULD LIMIT GUARANTORS TO MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES. IN ANY CASE, FRENCH FEEL STRONGLY THAT THEY CANNOT ACCEPT ANY SUCH COMMITMENT.

5. SECONDLY, AS EXPECTED, MINTOFF HAS LINKED THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ISSUES, AND NOW WANTS TO KNOW: "HOW MUCH?". FRENCH CLAIM THEY FEEL UNDER NO IMMEDIATE TIME PRESSURE THIS POINT, AND ARE CURRENTLY STUDYING WHAT LITTLE THEY CAN DO FOR MALTA BY WAY OF LOANS AND AN INDUSTRIAL MISSION WHICH MIGHT BE SENT THERE LATER THIS SPRING. ITALIANS MAY REPEAT MAY HAVE MADE FIRST DISCREET LOW-KEY CONTACT WITH LYBIANS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PARIS 07501 01 OF 02 151258Z

ALGERIANS, AND TUNISIANS TO SEE WHAT THEY MIGHT

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PAGE 01 PARIS 07501 02 OF 02 151250Z

ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 07501

CONTRIBUTE. HOWEVER, BLOT SAID, TIME MAY COME SOON, WHEN FRENCH AND ITALIANS WILL HAVE TO ASK COUNTRIES SUCH AS THE FRG AND THE US WHETHER, AS FRENCH HOPE, THEY WILL AT LEAST BE PREPARED TO MAINTAIN PRESENT LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR MALTESE AFTER PRESENT AGREEMENT RUNS OUT. EMBOFF CLEARLY RECALLED OUR POSITION ON THIS SUBJECT AS SET FORTH REFTEL C. BLOT REPLIED THAT WHOLE ISSUE WOULD, NEVERTHELESS, EVENTUALLY HAVE TO BE FACED IN SOME FORM, SINCE FRANCE AND ITALY OBVIOUSLY CANNOT ASSUME ENTIRE BURDEN OF MALTA THEMSELVES.

6. BLOT AGAIN OFFERED US OPPORTUNITY TO STATE PRECISELY WHAT CONDITIONS, IF ANY, WOULD BE REQUIRED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PARIS 07501 02 OF 02 151250Z

SAFEGUARD AMERICAN INTERESTS IF AN EVENTUAL NEUTRALITY ARRANGEMENT WAS REACHED WITH THE MALTESE.

7. COMMENT: BLOT'S BRIEF ALLUSION TO POSSIBLE CONTINUATION OF US AND FRG CONTRIBUTIONS TO MALTA AFTER PRESENT AGREEMENT EXPIRES, MAY HAVE BEEN FEELER TO SEE IF OUR POSITION HAD CHANGED. HOWEVER, OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT IT WAS RATHER INTENDED AS FIRST VERY INFORMAL HINT THAT ISSUE WAS LIKELY TO BE RAISED, EVEN THOUGH NO QUAI DECISIONS THIS AND OTHER ASPECTS MALTESE PROBLEM HAVEYET BEEN REACHED.
GAMMON

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Disposition History: n/a
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